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DUPLICATES IN THE PSALTER.

By Professor L. W. BATTEN,

P. E. Divinity School, Philadelphia, Pa.

It is a striking phenomenon in Biblical criticism that we find different stories so much alike that some critics have been led to believe that they are merely different versions of the same event, agreeing in all essential points, differing in unimportant details. Thus Abraham on two different occasions represents Sarah as his sister (Gen. 12: 10-20; 20). Isaac did the same thing with Rebecca (Gen. 26). There are two stories of David and Saul in which Saul comes into David's power, but is spared by the magnanimous spirit of his enemy (1 Sam. 24 and 26). Critics honestly differ about these stories, whether based on a single event or not. However this may be, in the Psalms there are duplicates beyond any question. These duplicates are of five kinds: (1) The same poem occurs twice in the psalter. (2) A part of one psalm occurs again as a complete psalm. (3) A psalm is made up of portions of other psalms. (4) A psalm occurs out of the psalter in the same form. (5) A poem outside of the psalter is composed of portions of various psalms. We will study the first of these various cases.

The only case of a psalm recurring in its entirety is Ps. 14 (53). I give parallel translations so as to indicate every variation. Words in *italics* differ in the two poems: those in SMALL CAPITALS have no corresponding word in the other version.

PSALM 14.

For the chief musician. Of David.

The fool says in his heart,

"There is no God."

They are corrupt and do abominable
practices,

None does right.

PSALM 53.

For the chief musician: set to Mahalath, Maschil of David.

The fool says in his heart,

"There is no God."

They are corrupt and do abominable
wrongs,

None does right.

Jehovah looks down from heaven
Upon the sons of men,
To see whether any one does wisely,
Inquiring after God.

All have gone astray ;
Together they have become filthy :
None does good,
Not even one.

Are all the doers of evil without
knowledge,
Eating my people as they eat bread?
Upon *Jehovah* they do not call.

There they fear exceedingly ;
But God is in a righteous age.
The purpose of the afflicted ye frustrate :
But Jehovah is his refuge.

Would that Israel's rescue were come
from Zion :
When *Jehovah* restores the captivity
of his people,
Let Jacob rejoice,
Let Israel be glad.

God looks down from heaven
Upon the sons of men,
To see whether any one does wisely,
Inquiring after God.

Every one has gone back ;
Together they have become filthy :
None does good,
Not even one.

All are doers of evil without know-
ledge,
Eating my people as they eat bread?
Upon *God* they do not call.

There they feared exceedingly
WHERE THERE WAS NO FEAR,
For God has scattered the bones of
him who encamped against them ;
Thou hast put them to shame, for
God rejected them.

Would that Israel's rescue were come
from Zion :
When *God* restores the captivity of
his people,
Let Jacob rejoice,
Let Israel be glad.

To Ps. 14, there is in the LXX. a passage, not in the Hebrew and not in Ps. 53, in either text. It is as follows:—

“ Their throat is an open sepulchre :
With their tongues they have used deceit :
The poison of asps is under their lips :
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness :
Their feet are swift to shed blood :
Destruction and misery are in their ways :
And the way of peace they have not known :
There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

This passage is found as part of the Psalm in the English Bibles of Tyndale and Coverdale, and of Cranmer's Great Bible, and is now used in the Episcopal Prayer-Book. This may seem puzzling until we turn to Romans 3: 12–18, where we find the text identical—*verbatim et literatim*—with the lxx. addition. Was this passage in the lxx. text when St. Paul wrote? Was it then in the Hebrew, and later dropped out to make this psalm agree more fully with 53? Or has some copyist inserted this passage in the lxx. from St. Paul's epistle?

Rom. 3: 10b-12 is also a quotation. V. 12 is an exact quotation of Ps. 14: 3. 10b, 11 is a very free rendering of parts of vv. 1, 2 (Ps. 14). But the rest of the quotation (vv. 12-18) is found scattered in other parts of the Old Testament, mostly from the psalms. Some are quoted literally, some very freely. It is very likely that St. Paul supported his statement about the universality of sin (Romans 3) with so-called *proof texts*. The copyist, not seeing this and hearing the reproach that St. Paul quoted what was not in the Old Testament, inserted the proof texts bodily as a part of the psalm. This is the more likely as the passage mars seriously the poetic structure of the psalm. If this conclusion is sound we may disregard the lxx., though it has other unimportant variations, and consider only the difference found in the Hebrew, believing that it represents essentially the true text.

The differences are: a fuller superscription to Ps. 53; the invariable use of Elohim (God) in 53, while in 14 Elohim and Jehovah are both used; "practices," "deeds," becomes in 53, "wrong;" "gone astray," "gone back." V. 5 of 53 contains a slight addition. The question we must now consider is: How did these variations arise? For there cannot be two different psalms. Did the author himself publish his poem in two different versions? It is very common for poets to revise their works, so that a second edition may differ from the first in many particulars. It is certainly possible that the Hebrew poet should write a poem in one form and afterwards make slight changes in it.

Hengstenberg says each edition of the psalm has a different purpose, and the same man wrote both forms that each might fulfil its special purpose. This would be an easy solution, if it were consistent with the evidence: but does this critic explain satisfactorily the variations in the use of the divine name? He says:—

"In Psalm 14 the predominating interest showed itself in the different names of God being used according to their different meanings, in Psalm 53 the other interest prevailed, which sought to render palpable the design of the sevenfold repetition by uniformity of the name." Anything more purely fanciful and arbitrary would be hard to find.

The variations might be due to accidental corruptions in the text, both versions being liable to be wrong in minute points. We know that in many places, though always of slight importance, the Massoretic text is clearly different from what was originally written. Cheyne favors this view : "the variations," he says, "may be simply due to the ordinary causes of corruption." Perhaps it is too much to deny such a possibility for the changes are not much greater than have accidentally occurred in other places. But it has this against it, that there are evident marks of design in the differences in the use of the divine name. In Ps. 14 Jehovah occurs four times, and Elohim three : it can scarcely have been accidental that in Ps. 53, Elohim occurs invariably in place of the sacred name Jehovah. This is more certainly an intentional change as Elohim is the prevailing title of God in the second book of the present division, (Ps. 42-73), while in the first and third books Jehovah prevails. But it is quite possible that this difference was not the work of the poet. The collector of the second book may have changed these names for the sake of uniformity. There must be doubt about such a question until we know more of the motive of the various collections. Though it is difficult to suppose that the collector had a great mass of poems to choose from, and selected those which used Elohim, and rejected those which used Jehovah.

Prof. Briggs, in a note on this psalm in Lange's Commentary suggests that vv. 1-6 was the original and by a few alterations and additions, including v. 7, it was adapted to the circumstances of the exile. This adaptation is Ps. 53. V. 7 was at a later time added to Ps. 14 for the sake of conformity.

This corresponds to a present common custom in a similar matter. People are very free in dealing with religious hymns. In one collection verses are added : in another words are changed for various reasons. Every editor of a collection of hymns seems to hold himself at liberty to make whatever changes may seem to him desirable, or likely to make the hymns more suited to his purpose. Did the collectors of the psalms take a similar liberty ? It would now be looked upon as very wrong to change the inspired text, but are we sure

that there were always the same scruples? Editors at one time may have taken liberties with the text which would be impossible now. It may be added that the above is Perowne's view. He says: "The change in the fifty-third (Psalm) might very well have been introduced to adapt it to the peculiar circumstances of the time."

There is one other possibility that must be mentioned. The manuscript containing this psalm became illegible and was read in different ways, as some of the broken Assyrian tablets are now. This is Ewald's view, and it has certainly this in its favor, that there is a marked similarity of characters in the places where the reading is different. It does not require a knowledge of Hebrew to see these striking similarities; merely a comparison of the forms of the words in a Hebrew Bible is enough. It is easy to see how either reading could be taken from a blurred manuscript. Letters were often confused in the old square text, in which many of them really looked much alike. This theory, however, fails completely to account for the variety in the use of the divine names.